

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 04046

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, NATO, BE
SUBJECT: NATO INFRASTRUCTURE CEILING INCREASE

REF: USNATO 2309

SUMMARY: EMBASSY COMMENTS ON USNATO SUGGESTION (REFTEL)
THAT WE MAKE FURTHER DEMARCHE TO THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT
ON INCREASING NATO INFRASTRUCTURE CEILING. END SUMMARY.

1. THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IS IN NO POSITION AT PRESENT
TO TAKE ACTION ON THIS ISSUE. FOLLOWING ON THE APRIL 17
ELECTIONS, WE EXPECT A NEW CARETAKER GOVERNMENT TO BE
DESIGNATED SHORTLY. WHEN A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT IS DESIGNATED,
THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES WILL
START, WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY RESULT IN THE FORMATION OF
A GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY ESTIMATED THAT THIS
PROCESS WILL TAKE A MONTH; IT MAY TAKE LONGER.

2. AS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTED (BRUSSELS 3860), THE
BELGIAN GOVERNMENT THEORETICALLY HAS TWO WAYS IT CAN
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COME UP WITH FUNDS WITH WHICH TO INCREASE THE NATO
INFRASTRUCTURE CEILING. THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE CAN
TAKE FUNDS FROM A PROJECT ALREADY FUNDED IN ITS PRESENT
BUDGET OR IT CAN GO TO THE FULL CABINET TO REQUEST A
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION. NEITHER OPTION IS IN FACT
REALISTIC AT THE MOMENT.

3. NO CARETAKER MINISTER OF DEFENSE WILL RESTRUCTURE HIS MINISTRY'S BUDGET, WHEN HE MAY LEAVE OFFICE WITHIN A MONTH OR SO. NO CARETAKER GOVERNMENT WILL ACT TO APPROPRIATE NEW FUNDS FOR A NEW PROJECT EVEN THOUGH THE PROJECT HAS BEEN AGREED TO IN PRINCIPLE.

4. WE DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND COMMENT REFTEL THAT IT IS TOTALLY UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT NATO POLICY-MAKERS AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES TO ESTABLISH PRIORITIES BETWEEN MAJOR OUTLAYS OF FUNDS. AS THIS POINT IS THE BASIS OF THE PRESENT BELGIAN POSITION WHICH WE ARE BEING ASKED TO OVERCOME. WE WOULD APPRECIATE CLARIFICATION.
RENNER

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